



osteoblast

Welcome to Healthy Bones Australia!

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Welcome to Healthy Bones Australia!

Healthy Bones Australia, formerly Osteoporosis Australia, was renamed to reinforce the importance of prevention and a new resource hub was launched at www.healthybonesaustralia.org.au

Prof Peter Ebeling says “the renaming of our organisation to ‘Healthy Bones Australia’ reflects our aim – to protect, build and support better bone health for all Australians.”

The new name announcement was in February in response to the concerning 173,000 broken bones sustained by the Australian population last year. The patient organisation is calling for Australians to prioritise their bone health by learning the risk factors for osteoporosis and how to prevent poor bone health.

The announcement coincided with an article in MJA Insight, outlining preliminary findings and recommendations from the organisation's inaugural National Consumer and Community Forum. The Forum was convened to hear directly from people of different ages living with osteoporosis, and also GPs, specialists and representatives from key stakeholder organisations to address health system barriers to improve bone health. The Forum called for heightened community awareness, education, improved diagnosis and management of osteoporosis.

Recommendations included:

- The critical need for readily accessible osteoporosis treatments;
- Improved capture of patients post-fracture through the hospital system, to both diagnose osteoporosis and commence treatment (via more Fracture Prevention Clinics);

- A substantial increase in Australian's awareness of risk factors for poor bone health and osteoporosis; and
- General Practitioners (GPs) to focus more on bone health to prevent osteoporosis and fractures.

Prof Ebeling, Chair Healthy Bones Australia said “Concerningly, the prevalence of osteoporosis is on the rise, with more than 4.74 million Australians over 50 years of age living with poor bone health. Early diagnosis of osteoporosis is vital to reducing fracture rates, and their subsequent impacts and costs. These fractures cost the healthcare system more than \$3 billion each year.”

Website Resources for General Practice

The new Healthy Bones Australia website has a dedicated GP resources page (under the HCPs section) which includes specific information for GPs:

- Bone Density Testing in General Practice
- GP Position Statement on the Management of Osteoporosis
- RACGP Clinical Guidelines and summary
- Online copy of this magazine – GP Osteoblast

Importantly the GP page links to the 'Consumer Fact Sheets' section, explaining different risk factors (medical conditions/medications) and their impact on bone health.



WELCOME

In this issue, I would like to welcome you all to Healthy Bones Australia. Our new name really sets the goal for us as clinicians to prioritise, maintain healthy bones and prevent fractures. This is crucial as the prevalence of osteoporosis is on the rise, with more than 4.74 million Australians aged over 50 years living with poor bone health leading to fractures, costing more than \$3 billion annually. Increased awareness and early diagnosis of osteoporosis is vital to reducing fractures, and their subsequent impacts and costs.

As well, we have some new updates including a new drug on PBS. Romosozumab (brand name Evenity) is newly listed on the PBS and add to the number of effective treatments we have available for osteoporosis. The medicine can be prescribed by a specialist in people with severe osteoporosis who continue to fracture despite specific therapy.

I encourage all GPs to use the new website resources to help manage patients or simply direct patients to the website to access helpful information.

Dr Weiwen Chen

Welcome to Healthy Bones Australia! cont.

Greg Lyubomirsky, CEO, Healthy Bones Australia says "We encourage GPs to use these resources with patients or simply direct patients to the website to access helpful information. We know GPs are busy and we are here to support their efforts in investigating and diagnosing osteoporosis."

The website also includes a Youth Hub which outlines specific risk factors impacting younger adults.

Greg says "Bone health is an important part of general health. We know osteoporosis can be managed once patients are diagnosed and we need to shift the focus to prevention to avoid unwanted fractures and keep people out of hospital."



New for Your Patients

In addition to the Healthy Bones Australia website providing online fact sheets, information, tips and videos for consumers, we offer:

Helpline for Consumers
1800 242 141



Consumer Guide
This guide explains general bone health plus calcium, vitamin D, exercise and treatments.



Exercise Guide
This guide explains weight bearing, resistance and balance exercises and can also be used with a personal trainer.



Consumer and Exercise Guides can be mailed directly to consumers

Elaine's Story

At 52 years of age, Elaine experienced sudden and severe lower back pain after a twisting movement while cooking in her kitchen. The pain persisted and over the ensuing three years Elaine sought professional help from various specialists (including a rheumatologist, a neurosurgeon and four pain physicians). After noticing a slight curvature in her upper back in 2019, Elaine, then aged 55, was sent for a bone mineral density (BMD) scan by her GP which revealed severe osteoporosis. Elaine was immediately referred to an endocrinologist and further tests then identified vertebral fractures, hyperparathyroidism and vitamin D deficiency. Today, Elaine is passionate about sharing her story to help others and encourage investigation of risk factors for osteoporosis. Elaine says "no one suspected I was living with bone fractures." Although relieved to finally have a correct diagnosis of osteoporosis, her disease has proven life-altering and her multiple spinal fractures severely limit her normal life.



NEWS UPDATE

New Treatment on PBS

PBS subsidy for the new osteoporosis treatment Romosozumab (brand name Evenity) came into effect on 1 April. The restricted use treatment can be administered by a specialist once a month, by 2 injections during the same visit, for 12 months.

The medicine is initiated by specialists in people with severe osteoporosis when other osteoporosis medication has not worked. Once the course of treatment is completed another type of osteoporosis medication will be commenced to ensure the new bone formed is maintained. The PBS subsidy applies for 12 months for people with very low bone density who have experienced minimum of two fractures, with one of the fractures occurring whilst on another type of osteoporosis medication.

Leading endocrinologist Prof Ego Seeman, Melbourne, said "we welcome this new treatment for patients which provides a new option in our efforts to slow bone loss and help to rebuild some of the bone that has been lost and so reduce fractures."

Progress with the Australian and New Zealand Hip Fracture Registry (ANZHFR)

Despite difficult circumstances throughout 2020 many clinicians and other staff continued the important work of the registry. The Australian Hip Fracture registry has expanded to now include 78 hospitals with 3 additional hospitals part way through the ethics and governance approvals. This will represent 80% of targeted hospitals contributing to the registry.

The annual audit reports from the combined hospital sites continues to provide valuable data while improving clinical care for hip fracture patients. Hip fracture remains the most costly

type of fracture with the greatest impact on patients. Importantly, up to 50% of hip fracture patients have sustained a previous fracture however the registry report indicated only 9% of patients were on active therapy for osteoporosis upon admission with hip fracture. This highlights the need for improved diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis following minimal trauma fractures.

New Chair of Healthy Bones Australia

Healthy Bones Australia announced the appointment of a new Chair, Professor Peter Ebeling AO. Professor Ebeling has been the long-standing Medical Director of the organisation and is committed to improving bone health in Australia. Outgoing Chair John Hewson was instrumental in forming Healthy Bones Australia (formerly Osteoporosis Australia), recognising the need for an independent organisation representing people with osteoporosis. Professor Ebeling and the Board of Healthy Bones Australia thank John Hewson for his dedication and contribution over 20 years to make bone health a national health priority. Professor Ebeling is a current board member of the International Osteoporosis Foundation and an internationally recognised researcher in the area of bone health and a Past President of both the Endocrine Society of Australia and the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society.



New Chair Prof Peter Ebeling AO



Outgoing Chair John Hewson AM

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Resources for General Practice
Information and resources for general practice can be accessed online under the Healthcare Professional section of the Healthy Bones Australia website:
www.healthybonesaustralia.org.au